

THE SEARCH FOR NOAH'S ARK

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INTRODUCTION

Noah's ark! The very name instills visions of God's protective care of man. The story of how God saved the eight people who followed His counsel, along with representative animals, is almost universally known, both today and throughout the historical past. There exists a long tradition of sightings and other reports attesting to the survival of Noah's ark, which spans nearly four and a half millennia. The reports range from the tablets of Ebla (Tel Mardik) from circa 2500 BC to the sightings of George Greene in 1953. [Later reports, such as Fernand Navarra (1974), are not accepted, as is discussed below.]

In spite of such a long tradition attesting to the existence of the ark, two major problems prevent making a pilgrimage to see it, political instability aside. The first is that there is no one alive today (and known to the western world) who knows exactly where the ark lies. The second is that there remains some confusion concerning which mountain or mountains contain the ark. The story of Noah and the ark is so well entrenched in Western thought that any mountain found to contain the ark is going to be called "Mount Ararat" by definition.

Two major traditions exist for the location of the ark. The European tradition (accepted by most Western Christians today) places the ark on "[Mount Ararat](#)" in eastern Turkey, along the Araxes River near the border of the former USSR country of Armenia. However, that particular mountain is called [Mt. Masis](#) by the Armenians and [Agri Dag](#) by the Turks. Many Armenian historians discount modern "Mt. Ararat" as being the traditional landing place of the ark.

"It has long been the notion among many Christians that Noah's Ark came to rest as the Flood subsided upon the great peak known as Mount Ararat: this assumption is based on an erroneous reading of the 4th verse of the VIIIth chapter of Genesis. That verse does not say that the Ark landed upon Mount Ararat, but upon the 'mountains of Ararat.' Now, Ararat was the Hebrew version of the name, not of the mountain but the country around it, the old Armenian homeland, whose name at other times and in other tongues appears variously as Eirath, Urartu, etc. The prophet Jeremiah (LI,27), writing in 600 BC speaks of 'the kingdom of Ararat,' which kingdom at that time called itself [Urartu](#). Hence, the 'Mountains of Ararat' may mean any part of the tangled mountain mass of the country. The Armenians never called the colossus of the range, Ararat; to them that mighty peak was 'Masis'". (Kurkjian, 1959, pp. 1-2).

As Kurkjian noted, the Bible does not address the exact location of the ark, stating only that the ark "came to rest in the mountains of Ararat" (Gen. 8:4, NIV). However, some Jewish commentators do address the point more specifically.

"Cellarius points out a remarkable fact, that the Chaldean or Targum version of the Bible, called that of Onkelosius, reads Mount Kardu for Ararat, and another Targum or Tergum, called that of Jonathanis, reads, by misspelling, Kadrum Mountains." (Ainsworth, W., 1843, p. 343)

The W. Ainsworth comment leads to the second major area reported to contain the ark, the area in southeastern Turkey near Lake Van and the headwaters of the Tigris River. No specific mountain from this region is reported to contain the ark. This is the area described by some Babylonians,

Muslims and early Christians as the location of the ark.

"Ararat, that is Armenia: a country near Assyria and Mesopotamia, mentioned also in 2 King 19:37, Esay. 37:38, Ier. 51:27. The Greek here calleth them as the Hebreue, Ararat, but in Esay 37:38, it translateth it Armenia. Also the Chaldee here calleth them the mounts of Kardu, which many Writers witness to be the hills in Armenia, of Aram (that is Syria) and Minni, (wherof see Ier. 51:27) or of Ararat and Minni compounded." (Ainsworth, H., 1622).

The Kadrum Mountains, or Mt. Kardu, can be translated as the "Kurdish Mountains" or "Mountain of the Kurds" and are equivalent to the [Gordyaean Mountains](#) of the Greeks (see the comments of Sale, 1734, below). In 1622, H. Ainsworth makes the same point.

Since there is an alternate tradition for the location of the landing place of the ark, it is clearly important to examine the records as far back in history as attainable. Montgomery (1972) summarizes the early works (before the 19th century), but some that he did not include are included in the discussion below.

THE ANCIENT TRADITIONS (2500 BC TO 500 AD)

The oldest known written record of a deluge story seems to be the tablets from Ebla (Tel Mardik) in Syria dating from about 2500 BC. While still largely untranslated at this time, there is a report of a deluge story very similar to that in Genesis and written in a proto-Hebrew language (Horn, 1980). Unfortunately, we must await their translation to see exactly what is said about the ark and "Mt. Ararat".

The next document known to mention the flood and ark, as well as a definite landing place for the ark is the Gilgamesh Epic. The now famous story was recovered from the library of Assurbanipal in Ninevah and dates from about 650 BC. It identifies the landing place of the ark as "[Mt. Nisir](#)". Exactly where "Mt. Nisir" is remains unclear. A mountain or mountain range of that name is reported from the annals of King Ashurnasurpal II of Assyria (833-859 BC). The annals place it south of the Lower Zab (Wallis Budge and King, 1902, *fide* Montgomery, 1972).

Near 275 BC, A Chaldean priest named Berossus wrote a history of Babylon in Greek which he compiled from native documents. His works have not survived, but are quoted by several later authors, including Alexander Polyhistor (last century BC), Josephus (37 to *circa* 100 AD), and Moses of Chorene (5th century AD). In his discussion of the Gilgamesh Epic, he places the landing site of the ark in the Gordyaean Mountains.

Josephus cites several other writers in addition to Berossus in whose works the existence of the ark is discussed. The only one to mention a landing place for the ark was Nicholas of Damascus (from about the time of Christ). He states:

"There is above the country of [Minyas](#) in Armenia a great mountain called Baris, where, the story goes, many refugees found safety at the time of the flood, and one man, transported upon an ark, grounded upon the summit; and relics of the timber were for long preserved; this might well be the same man of whom Moses, the Jewish legislator, wrote."

Montgomery (1972, p. 62) suggests that Minyas is the same as Minni of the Old Testament and Mannu of Assyria. The Seventh Day Adventist Bible Commentary (vol. 8, p. 722) agrees that Minni and Mannu are the same, and further states that it lies "east and southeast of Lake Urmiah" in Iran.

Several writers of the first century AD mention the existence of the ark. Theophilus of Antioch (*circa* 115-185) reports that the ark can be seen in his day "in the Arabian mountains." Epiphaneus of Salamis (*circa* 315-403), Chrysostoma (*circa* 345-407), and Isidore of Seville (*circa* 560-636) report the existence of the ark in their times, but do not give a location where it can be found.

In one of the more important works of the early Christian era, Faustus of Byzantium (4th century AD) reports the experiences of a bishop who traveled to the region of "Gortouk" to see the ark. He failed to complete the ascent and an angel of the Lord brought him a piece of the ark as a symbol of his faith. The bishop was reported to have been from the town of [Nesbin](#), a town that today lies in northeastern Syria. The naming of this city is important because it is mentioned again in a later report. Montgomery believes Gortouk to be equivalent to the region of Cortaea of Ptolemy in which the Gordyaeen Mountains are located. **Faustus (in the 4th century AD) appears to be the first author to use the term "Mount Ararat" as a specific mountain (versus a region) for the resting-place of the ark, which he places in the "Gortouk" region which is probably equivalent to the Gordyaeen Mountains.**

THE DARK AGES (700 TO 1200)

History after the 7th century AD saw the rise of Islam in the Middle East and the Dark Ages in Europe. The next records in the historical progression are all from Muslim writers. They use "Jebel Judi" instead of "Ararat" for the location of the ark because that is the name used in the Koran to describe the landing place of Noah's ark. Al-Mas'udi (956 AD) expounding on the Koran version of the flood says,

"[El-Judi](#) is a mountain in the country of Masur, and extends to Jezirah Ibn 'Omar which belongs to the territory of el-Mausil. This mountain is eight farsangs [about 32 miles] from the Tigris. The place where the ship stopped, which is on top of this mountain, is still to be seen." (Montgomery (1972).

Ibn Haukal, in the last half of the 10th century, places Al-Judi near the town of Nesbin. Remember that this is the mountain named by Faustus 700 years earlier as the town in which the bishop started his journey to see the ark. Ibn Haukal also states that Noah built a village at the foot of the mountain that he called Themanin.

The last of the Muslim commentators of the Dark Ages was George Elmacin (or Al-Makin or Ibn Al-'Amid, 1223-1274 AD). He describes the desire of an emperor of Byzantium to climb Al-Judi in the early part of the 7th century. Whether or not he accomplished his goal is unknown; he left from the region of Themanin.

THE RENAISSANCE TO THE PRESENT (1250 TO PRESENT)

About the same time that George Elmacin was writing, William of Rubruck wrote *The Journey of William Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World* (1253-1255). He did not see the ark himself, but describes an Armenian tradition placing the ark atop [Mt. Masis](#) near the Araxes River. He further relates the story of a monk who attempted to scale the mountain, but was unable to finish. An angel of the Lord brought him a piece of the ark and told him to attempt no more. This story of the monk is very similar to the story written by Faustus of Byzantium in the 4th century AD, 900 years prior, but who placed the incident further to the south in the Gordyaeen Mountains. **This 13th century AD account appears to be the first reference to place the ark on the mountain that today is call 'Mt. Ararat'. All prior accounts placed the ark further south.**

Shortly after William of Rubruck published his work, Vincent of Beausais was writing his massive *Speculum Quadraplex* (1256-1259). In it he also describes the attempt of a monk to climb Mt. Ararat. Again, as in the account of Faustus, the monk failed to climb the mountain and an angel of the Lord brought him a piece of it as a symbol of his faith. Montgomery (1972, p. 76) states, "This narrative appears almost certainly to depend on the account of Faustus of Byzantium..." I would further suggest that Vincent borrowed this story not from Faustus, but from William of Rubruck. Vincent located the landing site of the ark near the Araxes River, as did William, but not Faustus. In both the accounts of Vincent and William, it is a monk, who makes the climb, while in Faustus, it is a bishop.

By the end of the 13th century, it would seem that the tradition of Mt. Masis being Mt. Ararat had become firmly entrenched. All of the remaining authors cited by Montgomery follow this tradition. They include Jordanus (1329-1338), Odoric of Pordenone (*circa* 1330), Francesco Pegolotti (*circa* 1340), Sir John Mandeville (*circa* 1360), Gonzalez de Clavijo (1412), Adam Olearius (1662), Jans Janszoon Struys (1677), and Sir John Chardin (1684). All of these authors are reporting traditions of the people living around Agri Dagh at the time. None claim to have seen the ark themselves.

Never the less, the consensus was by no means unanimous. There are several authors not cited by Montgomery who did not follow the 13th century AD Armenian tradition. Sebastian Munster published an edition of *Ptolemy's Geographia* in 1548 in which he add the following annotation to Ptolemy's "Gordaei" mountains (translated from the Latin),

"These are the mountains of Armenia in which it is said Noah's ark rested after the flood. Boccatus and Haithonus call the mountains Ararat from whom this land of Ararat is mentioned in the book of Kings." (Munster, 1548, p. 97).

Nicolas de Nicolay, by 1558, had completed a trip to Turkey for the King of France as the court geographer. In his account of the trip, he mentions the following of Armenia,

"To come now to the original country of the Armenias, you must understand that Armenia is a region in Asia... In this region (as Isidore says) is the Mount Ararat, otherwise called Mount Gordian, upon the top whereof rested and remained the ark of Noah, after the great deluge was ceased." (Nicolas de Nicolay, 1558, p. 134).

In 1734, George Sale published an English translation of the Koran. In a footnote to Al-Judi (the Koran equivalent to Ararat) he wrote the following statement. It is quoted here in its entirety since it is otherwise not generally available.

"This mountain is one of those which divide Armenia on the south, from Mesopotamia, and that part of Assyria which is inhabited by the Curds, from whom the mountains took the name Cardu, or Gardu, by the Greeks turned into Gordyae, and other names. (See Bochart. Phaleg. 1. 1, c. 3.) Mount Al-Judi (which seems to be a corruption, though it be constantly so written by the Arabs, for Jordi, or Giordi) is also called Thamanin (Geogr. Nub. p. 202), probably from a town at the foot of it (D'Herbel. Bibl. Orient. p. 404 and 676, and Agathiam, 1. 14, p. 135), so named from the number of persons saved in the ark, the word thamanin signifying eighty, and overlooks the country of Diyar Rab ah, near the citles of Mawsel, Forda, and Jazirat Ebn Omar, which last place one affirms to be but four miles from the place of the ark, and says that a Mohammedan temple was built there with the remains of the vessel. by the Khalif Omar Ebn Abd'alaziz, whom he by mistake calls Omar Ebn Khattab (Benjamin. Itiner. p. 61). The tradition which affirms the ark to have rested on these mountains, must have been very ancient, since it is the tradition of the Chaldeans themselves (Berosus, apud Joseph. Antiq. 1. 1, c. 4): The Chaldean paraphrasts consent to their opinion (Onkelos et Jonathan, In Gen. viii. 4), which obtained very much formerly, especially among the Eastern Christians (Eutyck. Annal. P. 41). To confirm it, we are told that the remains of the ark were to be seen on the Gordyaen mountains : Berosus and Abydenus both declare there was such a report in their time (Berosus, apud Joseph. ubi sup. Abydenus, apud

Euseb. Praep. Ev. 1. 9, c. 4): the first observing that several of the inhabitants thereabouts scraped pitch from off the planks as a rarity, and carried it about them for an amulet: and the latter saying that they used the wood of the vessel against many diseases with wonderful success. The relics of the ark were also to be seen here in the time of Epiphanius, if we may believe him (Epiph. Haeres. 18); and we are told the emperor Heraclius went from the town of Thamanin up to the mountain A I -Judi, and saw the place of the ark (Elmacin. 1. 1. c. 1). There was also formerly a famous monastery, called the monastery of the ark, upon some of these mountains, where the Nestorians used to celebrate a feast day on the spot where they supposed the ark rested; but in the year of Christ 776, that monastery was destroyed by lightening, with the church, and a numerous congregation in it (Chronic. Dionysii Patriarch, Jacobitar, apud Asseman. Bibl. Orlent. t. 2. p.113). Since which time it seems the credit of this tradition hath declined, and given place to another, which obtains at present, and according to which the ark rested on Mount Masis, In Armenia, called by the Turks Agri Dagh or the heavy or great mountain, and situated about twelve leagues south-east of Erivan (al Beldawi)." (Sale, 1734; p. 214-215).

In 1842, Ainsworth, recounting his travels to Persia, makes the following statement in reference to Jebal Judi,

"It would scarcely be proper to leave Zakhu, with the lofty peaks of Jebel Judi, ...without saying a word upon a question agitated among Oriental travelers, concerning the comparative authenticity of the traditions which have reference to the site of the mountain called Ararat in the Old Testament. Facts illustrative of so remote an antiquity are naturally not numerous, and difficulty tangible. Mount Ararat has, however, been allowed by most of the ancient- profane or inspired writers, to belong to Armenia; but so do the Gordyene mountains, of which the Jebel Judi constitute a part, and to which tradition assigns its Thenanin, or Mountain of the Ark, as well as the Armenian Masis,--the Mohammedan Aghri Tagh (the Painful Mount*.)

"[*Mr. Consul Brant remarks that at Bayazid there are no traditions respecting the ark, and the natives know the mountain by no other name than Aghri Tagh.]

"The only Chaldean historian adopts the tradition current among the Chaldeans and Syrians as well as the Arabs and other Mohammedans of the present day that Ararat is in the Gordyean chain, and the memory of this was preserved till A.D. 776, by a Chaldean monastery, now supplanted by a Mohammedan mesjid, which is a monument consecrated by another worship to record the same event." (Ainsworth, 1842; Vol.. II, p. 340-341.)

The Islamic tradition that the ark rests on Jebal Judi is still extant today. Fraya Stark, in describing her travels in Kurdistan, says,

"We were crossing the Tigris watershed, and now the land broke westward, and the long promontory of Judi Dagh, that hangs over North Mesopotamia, appeared on our left, divided Into three more or less equal portions by ravines that were unapparent in the night. On the western tip or the most easterly ravine--the one, that is to say, attached to the central highlands--is the chapel that commemorates the stepping-out of Noah from the ark. Gertrude Bell In Amurath to Amurath, that excellent book, describes it, for we were now approaching lands visited by most of the Mesopotamian travelers during the last hundred years. Wigram, too, refers to the legend as a tale of unknown antiquity in the year A.D. 300, and adds that 'no people here save the Armenians, look on...Ararat...as the spot where the Ark rested' (pg. 335), and I myself remember seeing the snow-powdered line of Judi from the Shammar tents and being told how Nuh the prophet landed there, after first hitting Jebel Sinjar with his hull... The actual tomb of Noah, and his vineyard, are 'lower down on the hillside hard by the Nestorian village of Hasana' . . . " (Stark, 1959; pg. 90-91.)

PART II, MODERN CLAIMS TO HAVE SEEN THE ARK

NATIVE OBSERVERS FROM SOUTHEASTERN TURKEY

The previous reports presented above all represent various traditions or folklore. There are also several reports that claim to come from first-hand observation of the ark, rather than reports of local traditions. To our knowledge, however, only two of these reports (Hagopian and Reshit, below) are from direct interviews with the person who claims to have seen the ark, and none of those claiming to have seen the ark is still alive. Therefore, we have not been able to interview any of these sources ourselves. Their stories are quoted here in greater detail than those of the previous section, since we intend to compare them in detail for internal consistency, as well as for information to help locate the ark. Unless otherwise indicated, these stories are from Cummings, 1987.

The story of Haji Yearam is the first known to us where a person claims to have seen the ark himself. He was born in 1832 in Armenia, moved at sometime to Oakland, California, where he lived until he died in 1920. He related the following story to the people who were taking care of him shortly before he died. This story was related from memory by the people taking care of Haji, to Mr. Cummings, 32 years later.

"Haji Yearam's parents and family lived at the foot of Greater Mount Ararat in Armenia. According to their traditions, they were descended directly from those who had come out of the ark, but who had never migrated from that country. The descendants of Ham and his sympathizers had migrated over into the land of Shinar and built the tower of Babel, and others had migrated to other countries, but Haji's forebearers had always remained near the mount where the ark had come to rest in a little valley surrounded by some small peaks about three-quarters or more up on the mountain.

"For several hundred years after the flood his forebearers had made yearly pilgrimages up to the ark to make sacrifices and to worship there. They had a good trail and steps in the steep places. Finally the enemies of God undertook to go to Ararat and destroy the ark, but as they neared the location there came a terrible storm that washed away the trail, and lightning blasted the rocks. From that time on, even the pilgrimages ceased, because they feared to betray the way to the ungodly and feared God's wrath. They took that terrible storm to be a token that God did not want the ark disturbed until near the end of the world, when they believed that its presence would be revealed to the whole world. However, the tribesmen there handed down the legends from generation to generation, and from time to time lonely shepherds or hunters in very hot summers came back with stories that they had reached the little valley and had actually seen one end of the ark where it had been made visible by the melting of snow and ice.

"When Haji was a large boy, but not yet a man fully grown, there came to his home some strangers. If I remember correctly there were three vile men who did not believe the Bible and did not believe in the existence of a personal God. They were scientists and evolutionists. They were on this expedition specifically to prove the legend of Noah's Ark to be a fraud and a fake. They hired the father of young Haji Yearam as their official guide. (Haji at that time had not yet become a Haji, and was just a large boy). They hired the boy to assist his father as guide.

"It was an unusually hot summer, so the snow and glaciers had melted more than usual. The Armenians were very reticent to undertake any expedition to the Ark because they feared God's displeasure, but the father of Haji thought that possibly the time had come when God wanted the world to know the ark was still there and he wanted to prove to those atheists that the Bible story of the flood and the Ark is true.

"After extreme hardship and peril the party came to the little valley up on Greater Ararat, not on the very top, but a little down from the top. This little valley is surrounded by a number of small peaks. There the ark came to rest in a little lake, and the peaks protected it from

the tidal waves that rushed back and forth as the flood subsided. On one side of the valley the water from the melting snows and glacier spills over in a little river that runs down the mountain. As they reached this spot, there they found the prow of a mighty ship protruding out of the ice. They went inside the ark and did considerable exploring. It was divided into many floors and stages and compartments and had bars like animal cages of today. The whole structure was covered with a varnish or lacquer that was very thick and strong, both outside and inside the ship. The ship was built more like a great and mighty house on the hull of a ship, but without any windows. There was a great doorway of immense size, but the door was missing. The scientists were appalled and dumbfounded and went into a Satanic rage at finding what they had hoped to prove nonexistent. They were so angry and mad that they said they would destroy the ship, but the wood was more like stone than any wood we have now. They did not have tools or means to wreck so mighty a ship and had to give it up. They did tear out some timbers and tried to burn the wood, but it was so hard it was almost impossible to burn it.

"They held a council, and then took a solemn and fearful death oath. Any man present who would ever breathe a word about what they had found would be tortured and murdered." (Cummings, 1972; pg.190-192; emphasis ours).

Prince Nouri, the Chaldean Archbishop of Babylon, is the next to report having seen the ark himself. Prince Nouri was traveling from Malabar, India, to Kochanis, Turkey (see fig. 4). He was making the trip to be consecrated as bishop. After departing from Kochanis, he went to Urmiah in Persia, five days from Kochanis, where he met Dr. Frederick B. Coan. He related to Dr. Coan how, during that trip, he succeeded, after three attempts, in making his way to the ark, on April 25, 1887. He later went to Belgium to recruit a company to bring the ark to the World's Fair to be held in Chicago in 1893. He could not find sufficient financial support to remove the ark to Chicago, but he did deliver an address to the World Parliament of Religions at the Chicago Fair on the existence of the ark. No statements survive, though, stating the location of the mountains where he saw it.

The last of the Middle East people to reach the ark, and whose reports have reached the West, is George Hagopian. As a small boy he and his uncle reached the ark in 1902. He again visited the ark two years later. He is the only person we believe to have seen the ark that has been extensively interviewed prior to his death. These interviews were taped and are maintained by Mr. Lee, Mr. Cummings and Dr. Montgomery. The party left from Van, and traveled seven days to reach the ark. The ark was long, and made of wood like stone. It was near a very high cliff, sitting on a large rock, surrounded by snow. Elfred Lee has made a painting of the ark according to Hagopian's description and under his supervision. (See figure 5.)

THE WESTERN OBSERVERS

World War I saw a large influx of "outsiders" into eastern Turkey. The Turks were fighting Czarist Russian troops, and from 1914 to 1923, the front was constantly changing (see fig. 4). It is from this time that we have several reports of the ark being seen. Apparently, a Russian aviator first sighted the ark, and from his report an expedition was mounted to investigate. The following is the report of the son-in-law of a soldier from the Russian expedition.

"While in the Russian Army, they were ordered to pack for a long tramp up into the Mountain of Ararat. A Russian aviator had sighted what looked to him like a huge wooden structure in a small lake. About two-thirds of the way up, probably a little farther, they stopped on a high cliff, and in a small valley below them was a dense swamp in which the object could be seen. It appeared as a huge ship or barge with one end under water, and only one corner could be seen from where these men stood. Some went closer, especially the Captain. They could not get out to it because of the water and the many poisonous snakes and insects. The Captain told them of the details." (Cummings, 1972; pg. 114-115; emphasis ours.)

Following World War I, six or seven Turkish soldiers were returning home from duty in Iraq and passed by "Ararat". Few details of their sighting remain, and what exists is in a letter to whom it may concern offering their services as guides (see Cummings, 1972; pg. 259-261; see also fig. 4 above).

World War II again brought many "outsiders" to eastern Turkey. This time they were American and Australian aviators who were flying supplies to Erivan in southwestern Russia from Tunisia in northern Africa. There are rumors of several independent sightings and of photographs being taken of the ark, but none have yet been authenticated. However, several people remember a photograph of the ark that was published in the military weekly newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*. Unfortunately, no copies of that issue have been located. As can be seen in figure 4, Erivan is only about 30 miles from Agri Dag. We suggest that if the ark was on that mountain, the pilots effecting daily passages over and around Agri Dag would have seen it much more often.

Shortly after the war, a Swedish physician was talking to a Russian aviator in Hamburg, Germany. The aviator showed him several pictures recently taken from the air and marked as having been taken at "4500 meters", about 13,000 to 14,000 feet in elevation.

"One of the pictures showed the ship protruding out of the ice approximately 80 to 90 feet and it was tilted slightly downwards. In the bottom of that area was a little melted pond or lake. The glacier was shown in the mountain summit in the upper right of the picture and the other pictures were taken at a similar angle. To me it appeared that they were taken on the north side." (Cummings, 1972; pg. 330; emphasis ours.)

In 1948, there was another sighting of Noah's ark by a local native. This time the report reached the western world through Associated Press from Istanbul.

"The petrified remains of an object peasants insist resembles a ship has been found high up Mt. Ararat, Biblical landing place of Noah's Ark. This is the story: Early in September a Kurdish farmer named Reshit was about two-thirds of the way up the 16,000 foot peak when he came on an object he had never seen before. Reshit climbed down to it and with his dagger tried to break off a piece of the prow. It was so hard it would not break. It was blackened with age..." (Cummings, 1972; pg. 163; emphasis ours.)

In the summer of 1952 or 1953, George Greene, an oil-pipeline engineer, discovered the ark and photographed it while working for an oil pipeline company in eastern Turkey. In 1954, he showed the pictures to Fred Drake, who he had met in Kanab, Utah. Greene later went to British Guyana, where he was subsequently murdered. His photos, maps, etc. all disappeared.

Mr. Drake has related what is known about the ark. Reportedly, Greene was flying when he sighted the ark and he took half a dozen pictures. According to Drake, the ark was on the northeast flank of the mountain, with the prow pointing north and slightly west. Only one side of the ark was visible, as it sat in a morass of brush and ice. It was resting on an "imbricate fault" system, near the edge of a large cliff (see fig. 6).

Exactly what type of aircraft Greene was in, as well as exactly where he was, remains a matter of controversy. Mr. E. Cummings (pers. comm., 1983) states that Greene was flying in a Mobile Oil Company helicopter and had official permission to fly around Agri Dag, but records including the AAPG Bulletin show that Mobil was not present in Turkey during the years 1952-1953. Other accounts (P. Watson, pers. comm., 1976) allow the possibility that he was actually in a fixed wing aircraft.

There is also the problem of where in Turkey Greene was working. As can be seen in figure 4, the oil fields of eastern Turkey are far to the south of Agri Dag, nearer the area of the Gordyaean Mountains and Al-Judi. It is difficult to imagine, during the Cold War years of the early 1950's, the

Turkish government sponsoring an oil pipeline project from its southern region toward the Soviet Union! Regardless of where Greene was actually working, the context of a pipeline engineer prospecting near southern Turkey fits well with the historical development of oil fields in that region (see AAPG Bulletins for 1951-1955).

PART III, DISCUSSION THE TRADITIONS

As can be seen in [Table I](#), there is a clear trend in the history of traditions surrounding the landing place of the ark. Mt. Nizer is the first, but its exact location remains uncertain. The Gordyaeen mountains appear very early in tradition, continuing through to the 19th century. The name "Gordyaeen" is an Anglicization of the Greek word "gordyae" which means Kurds, the people still inhabiting the area (Sale, 1734). Kurd is variously spelled Cardu, Gardu, Qardu, Cortae, etc., depending on the language of the particular author. The Gordyaeen mountains are literally "the mountains of the Kurds". Sale's suggestion (1734) that Al-Judi is a corruption of Jordi or Giordi and equals the Gordyaeen mountains is an interesting one. It follows what later authors such as Ainsworth (1842) say.

The location of the Gordyaeen Mountains is difficult to ascertain. Early maps, such as found in Schott (1513) and Munster (1548), are difficult to interpret; different sources disagree on exactly where to place the Gordyaeans. The information was obviously incomplete, as the relationship of Thospitis Lake (modern Lake Van) to the Gordyaeen Mountains in the two editions of Ptolomy ' s work as illustrated in figure 7 are different. This should not be surprising, since the term probably never meant a particular range, but an area. The same is true for Ararat in the Bible, and both probably refer to the same area. Modern examples of this practice include the Rocky Mountains, Alps, Himalayans, etc. These are really broad tectonic areas composed of many individual ranges, such as the Wind River range, the Bighorn Range, etc., within the Rocky Mountains of Wyoming.

The tradition for Agri Dagh to be the landing place for the ark is comparatively young. The first reference we could find to it was William of Rubruck in the 13th century A.D., although from that time on it seems to be well entrenched in the Christian world. Both it and the Al-Judi traditions are the most popular today.

THE OBSERVATIONS

That the ark has been seen in this century, there can be little doubt. Key characters concerning the ark that were listed by seven of the many accounts are illustrated in [Table II](#), where the characters have been grouped according to the number of sources that share them. It should be readily apparent that there is close harmony between them. Most sources describe the ark as being between two-thirds and three-quarters of the way up the north/northeast side of the mountain, in a small wooded valley surrounded by small peaks, near a high cliff, with part of the ark submerged in a small lake or swamp and partly covered with snow and ice. Most also describe the ark as being made of a dark brown wood as hard as stone, but with the grain still visible--like petrified wood. The importance of this general concordance is that these reports are completely independent and span over one hundred years.

Most of the reports mention Mount Ararat as the place where the ark was seen. This should not be surprising since, as previously noted, to western minds, any mountain found to hold the ark would, by definition, be called Mount Ararat.

PART IV, CONCLUSIONS

We have derived the following conclusions from this study:

1). Noah's ark is still in existence and has been seen many times in this century. It seems most unlikely that reports from so wide a cultural diversity and spanning so large an interval, could be entirely fictional and still share so many fine details.

2). We do not believe the ark rests on Agri Dagh for the following reasons:

- a). The associated details of where the ark is located cannot be reconciled with the topography of Agri Dagh. The mountain has been extensively explored, and no small lake in a wooded valley, especially surrounded by several small peaks, can be associated with the known topography of the two volcanic cones of Agri Dagh.
- b). The tradition that Agri Dagh holds the ark is a relatively recent one, the most recent one known to us.
- c). At the time Moses wrote Genesis, Agri Dagh was not within the kingdom of Ararat (Urartu), but the area containing Jebel Judi was (see fig. 2). Although archeology has brought to light some remains from the 3rd and 2nd millennia B.C. from the area we call the Kingdom of Urartu (Plotrovsky, 1969); "there is at present no sound evidence attesting to the existence of The Kingdom [of Urartu] before the ninth century B.C." (Burney and Lang, 1971; pg. 127). Even if we accept that Urartu is equivalent with Uruatri mentioned in the annals of Shalmaneser I (1280 to 1261 B.C.), Uruatri designates a group of "eight countries ... situated in a mountainous area southeast of Lake Van-- perhaps in the upper valley of the Great Zab." (Plotrovsky, 1969; pg 43. Emphasis ours). That area does not include Agri Dagh.
- d). The topography of Agri Dagh is also inconsistent with the description of the landing site of the ark given by Yearham and White where the ark was harbored by a cluster of mountains, resting first on one the another, and they were mountains God had preserved through the flood. Two volcanic cones do not qualify.

3). We suggest that the more ancient traditions of the Gordyaean mountains and Jebel Judi area be further searched.

4). Fernand Navarra (1974) has not found any part of the ark, as he has claimed. We believe this because:

- a). His discoveries were on Agri Dagh, which we have excluded on other grounds.
- b). The wood he found has a radiocarbon date too young (see Noorbergen, 1974; pp. 142-161) and its composition is not "hard like stone". Since the wood found in the fossil record has an infinite radiocarbon age, and we believe that the bulk of the fossil record was deposited during the deluge of Noah, we would expect the wood from Noah 's ark to also have an infinite radiocarbon age.
- c.) Navarra "forgot" where he found the wood, and despite several subsequent attempts, has not been able to re locate the ark.

It seems unlikely that the mountain referred to by most eyewitnesses as Mount Ararat (Agri Dagh) is the Biblical Ararat. If one returns to figure 1, it can be seen that there are no little lakes noted, especially near a high cliff and in a small, wooded valley surrounded by small peaks. Agri Dagh consists of twin, giant volcanic cones generally void of vegetation.

Other reasons to doubt Agri Dagh as the landing site include the account of the Turkish soldiers returning home from Iraq following World War I, and the account of George Greene. The Turkish soldiers were returning from Baghdad to their home in Adana (Benzatyan, pers. comm., 1983). As can be

seen in figure 4, travelers to Adana would traverse the area of the Gordyaen Mountains, but would be unlikely to pass through the area of recent fighting along the Russian border. That would be far out of the way, as well as being a good excuse to be drafted into the war again.. This is especially true since they encountered the ark "by chance".

The final reason to doubt Agri Dagh involves the account of George Greene. As previously mentioned, it seems very unlikely that anyone would be flying near the Soviet border during the Cold War. In addition, it seems more likely that an oil pipeline engineer would be working near the oil fields, which are further to the south, near the Gordyaean Mountains and Al-Judi.

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